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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 002264

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, AF/SPG

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TAGS: PREL PHUM KPKO SU QA EG

SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE HAPPY WITH "QATARI INITIATIVE," EGYPT
LESS SO

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1549

1B. KHARTOUM 1532

1C. KHARTOUM 1521

1D. CAIRO 1603

1E. CAIRO 2197

1F. CAIRO 1877

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: The Arab League Advisor told us that the Government of Sudan (GOS) supports the Qatari initiative as a way to end the crisis in Darfur, and sees it as an accompaniment to the recently announced Sudan People's Initiative. However, Sudanese oppositionists in Cairo said Darfuri leaders are skeptical that the Arab League and Qatar can be fair mediators in the conflict because they feel they are too close to the GOS. As a result, the Darfuri leaders are not currently backing the proposed Doha talks. Separately, the Government of Egypt (GOE) expressed surprise when the Qatari Initiative was announced at the Arab League Ministerial in early September. The GOE is concerned that the numerous initiatives on Sudan will prevent a multi-lateral agreement. However, unless Egypt asserts itself, it risks being relegated to the role of a back-seat driver on the Sudan issue. End Summary.

Meetings with Government Officials, Arab Justice Ministers

12. (C) Zeid al-Sabban, the Arab League's Advisor to the Secretary General on African Affairs, briefed us October 14 on his four-day trip to Sudan where he and a Qatari delegation, met with GOS and National Congress Party (NCP) officials and Darfuri leaders to enlist support for the Arab League-sponsored "Qatari Initiative." Sabban said that Sudanese Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie, who in previous meetings had displayed a combative nature, was more deferential in working with the Qatars. Nafie assured the delegation that "all issues could be put on the table in order to resolve Darfur." However, he still insisted that the GOS views the enactment of Article 16 of the Rome Statute to stay the ICC indictment of President Bashir as an essential pre-condition. Sabban told us Sudanese Second Vice President Ali Othman Taha was forthcoming and keen to move on the Qatari initiative. Sabban reported that both sides agreed that this was the "right time" to resolve Darfur, and they did not want to "lose this opportunity." Sabban told us that Sudanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Kurti asked the delegation to support Bashir's Sudan People's Initiative by providing a legal team to help create and implement internal laws to bring those guilty of crimes in Darfur to justice (reflets A-C).

13. (C) The delegation attended the Arab Justice Ministers'

meeting on the ICC indictment. Sabban stated that the GOS presented the ministers with a draft document to stay the ICC indictment. Sabban characterized the draft as "unacceptable and silly" because it called on Arab states to withdraw from the ICC, and to publicly attack the ICC prosecutor. He said the Arab ministers redrafted the document, and told us that the new document is based on international law and focuses on the principle of "Head of State immunity." Sabban sees this new document as being complementary to the Arab League solution package for Sudan (reftel D).

Bashir Encourages the Qatari Initiative

¶4. (C) The delegation also met with President Bashir. According to Sabban, Bashir congratulated the delegation on their efforts and stated that the GOS is "willing to consider all demands" to resolve the Darfur situation. Bashir supports the Qatari Initiative and told the delegation "not to lose patience." Sabban said Bashir stressed that if the initiative did not succeed there would be a "return to clashes" that would "burn all of us" and have "long repercussions."

Traveling the Country to Drum up Support

¶5. (S) The delegation met Sudan People's Liberation Movement leader and Government of National Unity First Vice President, Salva Kiir in Juba. Kiir said the Qatari initiative has his

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"full support." However, he doubts that the initiative will succeed because it lacks support from the Darfur movements. Sabban agreed that the delegation must work to gain the support of the "key Darfur movement leaders." He shared with us the AL/Qatari plan, which he called a "3 2 plan." Sabban stated that the plan focused on obtaining the support of three key internal leaders: Abdallah Yaya, Abdel Shafi, and Abu Garda; and two important external leaders Abdel Wahid al-Nur and Khalil Ibrahim. He felt that with their support the initiative would succeed.

¶6. (C) In El Fasher in North Darfur, the delegation met with leaders in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, and UNAMID leaders. Sabban told us that the IDP leaders warned the delegation not to neglect them because they are "as important as the rebel movement leaders." IDP leaders said the rebel movements are "using the camps," have "ruined the stability of the camps" and provoked Sudanese Government forces to "kill us." IDP leaders presented the delegation with a list of 16 demands for their participation in the talks. These demands include full deployment of UNAMID forces, disarming the Janjawid and constituting a war crimes tribunal. UNAMID leaders told the delegation that the AL and Qatar face a challenge in garnering support for the initiative. Sabban said the UNAMID leaders told the group that "internally displaced persons do not trust the Arab League because they believe the AL is biased toward the Sudanese Government." The delegation attended Darfuri parliamentary sessions in Nyala, South Darfur and Jeneina, West Darfur. Sabban said discussions with the parliamentarians were "open and frank" with most leaders presenting their own solutions and criticizing Bashir and the Sudanese Government. Sabban stated the candid discussions were "shocking" to the Qatari delegation, but he categorized the meetings as beneficial and "a good exchange of views."

Doha Talks Not Certain

¶7. (C) Sabban said that the Arab League and Qatar will not set a time for talks in Doha without agreement on the path

forward on the judicial, security, internal reconciliation and humanitarian elements within Sudan. For this reason the AL and Qatar support Bashir's Sudan People's Initiative. This working-level assessment contrasts with AL SYG Moussa's assertion to the Ambassador that Doha peace talks would be held by the end of October. (reftel E)

Egypt Concerned, But Too Risk-Averse to Lead

¶ 8. (S) Ahmed Abu Zeid, cabinet advisor for African Affairs at the Egyptian MFA, told us October 9 that the Government of Egypt (GOE) had been surprised by the AL/Qatari initiative. He said the proliferation of initiatives on Sudan is not helpful. Abu Zeid stated that the AL/Qatari initiative is "more focused on the legal case against Bashir and not enough on the political process." He bristled that Qatar "does not know the Sudan issue" and AL SYG Moussa "cannot take all the responsibility." Abu Zeid repeated the Egyptian position that there be a multi-lateral initiative to "hold feet to the fire" on Sudan (reftel F). He said that increased Egyptian involvement would bring "more substance and clarity." AL Advisor Sabban acknowledged some tensions between the Egyptians and Qataris after the initial unveiling of the Qatari initiative at the AL ministerial in September, but he felt that things were getting better because both shared the same goals for Sudan.

¶ 9. (S) Ahmed Haggag, President Mubarak's Special Envoy for Darfur and Secretary General of the Africa Society, told us October 9 that Qatar is a "small country trying to play an important role." He said the Qatar was using "check diplomacy", but opined that this could work. However, he stated that the AL and Qatar should work in concert with others. Haggag told us that Egypt can bring perspective to the process, but financial issues limit the role that Egypt can play. He said that Egypt would not lead because "loyalties in Sudan are shifty" and "there are too many Sudanese living in Egypt to side with specific parties." Haggag said Egypt would support a good agreement, like the Abuja Agreement that Haggag signed on behalf of the GOE, but that Egypt is too risk-averse and "worried about losing face" to lead on Sudan.

¶ 10. (C) Comment: While the Arab League/Qatari initiative

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appears to have buy-in from the GOS, our contacts in the Sudanese community in Cairo tell us that the Darfur rebel movements do not trust the Arab League or Qatar and currently do not plan to participate in the Doha talks. Sabban stressed AL and Qatari efforts to recruit arfuri leaders, but could not say if any leaderswould support the initiative. For its part, Egyp will continue to mull over its alternatives on Sudan. Although FM Aboul Gheit attended the Sudan People's Initiative kick-off on Khartoum on October 16, and has publicly supported the Qatari initiative, it is clear that the GOE is not entirely happy with Qatari initiative. The GOE's reticence to lead may relegate it to the role of a back seat driver on an issue of critical, strategic importance.
SCOBAY